

**Amendments To The Claims:**

Claims 1-33. (canceled)

Claim 34. (Previously presented) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

a plurality of annular elements, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; and  
at least a portion of the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state; wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is cut from a tube.

Claim 35. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 34, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration, and wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

Claim 36. (Cancelled).

Claim 37. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 34 wherein the diameter of the stent increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 38. (Cancelled)

Claim 39. (Previously presented) A stent having an unexpanded state and an expanded state, the stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

a plurality of annular elements,  
the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state with the diameter of the stent continuously increasing from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end;  
wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is cut from a tube.

Claim 40. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 39, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a

substantially annular configuration, and wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

Claim 41. (Cancelled).

Claim 42. (Previously presented) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

a plurality of interconnected annular elements, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; wherein at least a portion of the stent has a tapered configuration in the expanded state; and wherein the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility; and wherein the stent is formed from a single piece of material.

Claim 43. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 42, wherein each annular element comprises a plurality of alternating struts and apices connected to each other to form a substantially annular configuration.

Claim 44. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 43, wherein the stent further includes connecting members that are connected to the apices of the adjacent annular members.

Claim 45. (Previously presented) The stent of claim 44 wherein the diameter of the stent increases from a first diameter at the first end to a second greater diameter at the second end.

Claim 46. (Cancelled)

Claim 47. (Previously presented) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent comprising:

a plurality of annular elements including an end-most annular element at the first end and an end-most annular element at the second end, each annular element having a compressed state and an expanded state; and  
at least a portion of the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state;  
wherein the end-most annular element at the first end has a different degree of flexibility than the end-most annular element at the second end; and  
wherein the stent is formed from a tube.

Claim 48. (New) A stent having a first end, an opposing second end, and a longitudinal length, the stent having a compressed state and an expanded state, the stent comprising:

a plurality of interconnected annular elements, adjacent annular elements defining a flow path through the stent, at least a portion of the flow path of the stent having a tapered configuration in the expanded state, the first and second ends have different degrees of flexibility, the stent being cut from a tube.

Claim 49. (New) The stent of claim 48 wherein the interconnected annular elements are connected by a plurality of connector elements, each connector element comprising at least one bent region.